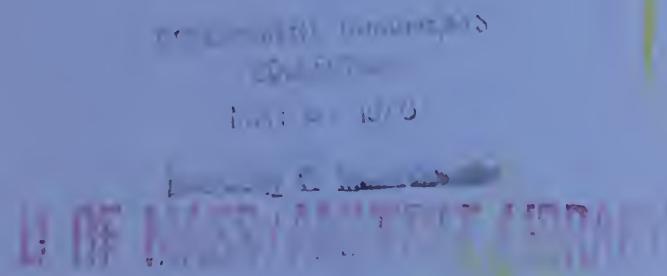


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BROCHURE OF SERVICES
OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION
FOR THE BLIND



110 Tremont Street
Boston, Massachusetts

MARIE A. MATAVA
COMMISSIONER

784/59



INTRODUCTION

The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind is a state agency, funded entirely by federal and state monies, within the Secretariat of Human Services.

The Commission for the Blind has a budget of approximately twenty million dollars, out of a total Human Services budget of 1.896 billion dollars. There are 235 employees of the Commission.

Aside from the administrative structure, which includes the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, there is a regional, a program and a fiscal structure. All services of the Commission are now provided on a regional level. That is, the state is divided into six regions: each region has a director, accountable to the Commissioner, as well as vocational rehabilitation counselors, social rehabilitation workers and rehabilitation workers. MCB workers in each region work with other agencies (such as, the Department of Elder Affairs, the Department of Public Welfare, Mass. Rehabilitation Commission, Department of Mental Health, Office for Children) to assure that every individual client of the Commission receives all services necessary and available, with efficiency and without duplication of time and money.

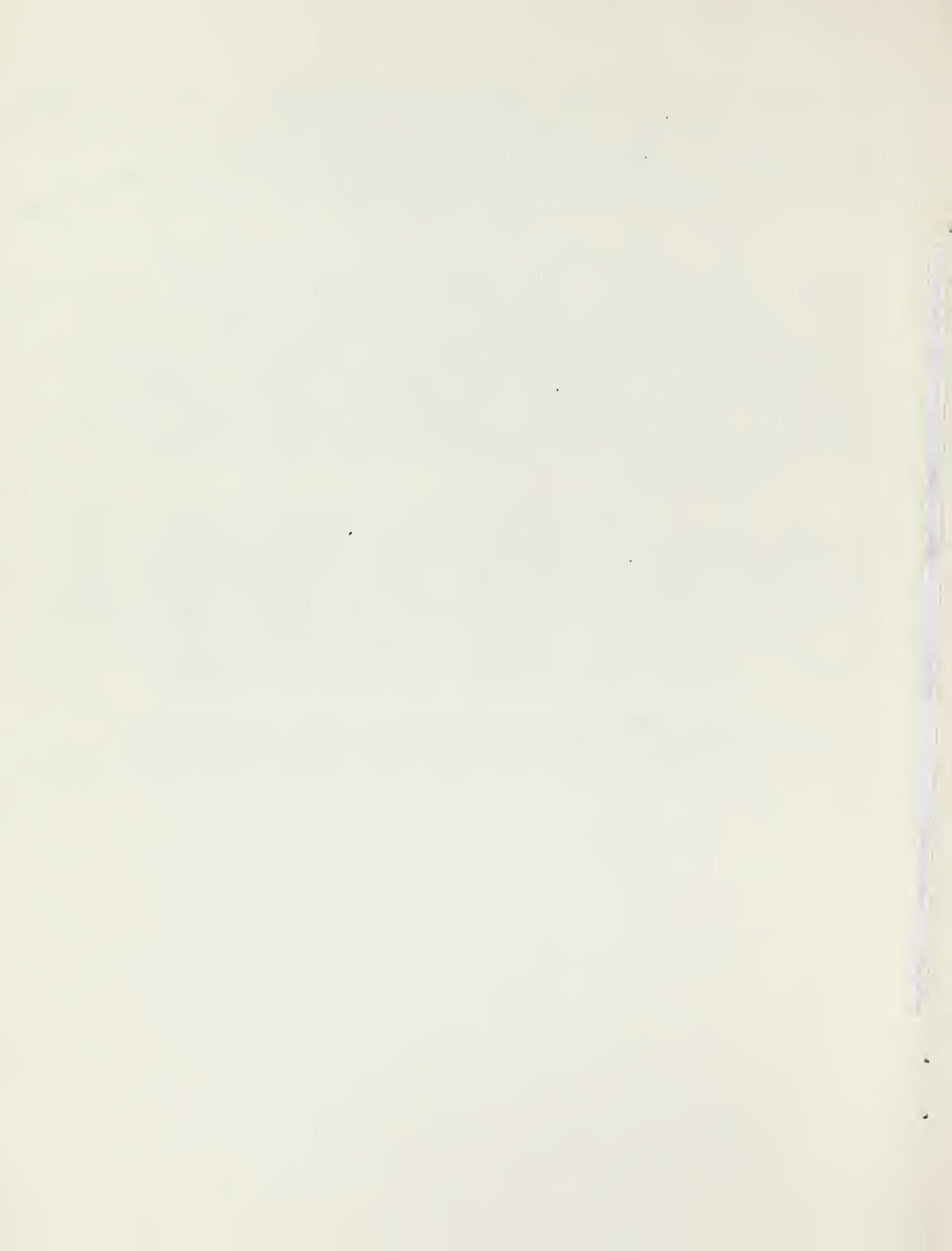


Program services, such as Medical Assistance, Talking Books, Pre-school Children's Services, Multi-handicapped Services and Community Mobility are provided statewide from the Boston office of the Commission for the Blind.

There are currently over 16,000 people on MCB's register. Most of these people receive some kind of services, ranging from travel passes and certificates of legal blindness, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Medical Assistance, talking Book machines and/or records to counseling and rehabilitation teaching.

If you have any questions, please call the worker for your region (See the section on Regional Structure for your region and the proper telephone number), or call the Commission's general number, 727-5550, or toll free: 1-800-392-6450, extension 5550.

This brochure is available on cassette tape through the Office of the Commissioner.



INFORMATION LINE

If you have an informational question regarding the Commission or its services, call 727-5550 or toll free: 1-800-392-6450, extension 5550.

The Commission has installed an automatic telephone answering service for the convenience of our clients. Call the Commission's general information number, 727-5550 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:45 a.m., and all day on Saturdays and Sundays. Notices of interest are placed on the service and changed each Friday evening. At the end of the notice, you are able to ask questions, make comments or leave messages by leaving your name and telephone number. You may also use the toll-free number above to call the telephone tape.

NONDISCRIMINATION

No blind individual who applies for any services of this Commission or receives any service of this Commission will be discriminated against because of race, color, or ethnic origin.



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DEFINITION OF BLINDNESS

Section 136, Chapter 6 of the General Laws of Massachusetts provides that: "Whenever, upon examination at a clinic, hospital or other institution, or elsewhere, by a physician or optometrist, the visual acuity of any person who is found to be with correction 20/200 or less in the better eye or the peripheral field of his vision, to have contracted to the 10 degree radius* or less, regardless of visual acuity, the superintendent of such institution or the physician, optometrist, or other person who conducted or was in charge of the examination if it took place elsewhere than in such institution, shall within thirty days report to the Commissioner, the results of the examination and that blindness has been established."

Forms for reporting of blindness are furnished by the Commission for the Blind on request.

*10 degree radius and 20 degree diameter are synonymous.

CENTRAL REGISTER

CERTIFICATES OF BLINDNESS

Certificates of Blindness are issued by the Central Registration Department of the Commission for the Blind. Only persons who are registered as legally blind with the Commission are eligible for the Certificate of Blindness.

Certificates are issued upon request of the registrant or through a member of the staff. All Certificates are mailed directly to the registrant. Certificates may be obtained in person by the registrant only.

Certificates indicate the registrant's name, address, registration number, date of registration and date of issue.

Certificates are issued for verification of registration necessary in obtaining various tax exemptions, applications and other identification purposes.

REGIONAL STRUCTURE

Commission services are now delivered on a regional basis rather than a program basis. Each region involves vocational rehabilitation, social services and rehabilitation teaching. The regional director has the authority to assign such staff to blind persons who wish such services. The purpose of the new system is to serve blind persons efficiently and promptly.

Region I (Springfield and western counties)

The office is located at 1200 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01103; telephone 1-413-781-1290. The Director is John Hobin.

Region II (Fitchburg-Worcester)

The office is located at 7 Hills Plaza, 90 Madison Street, Worcester, MA 01608; telephone 754-1148. The Director is Michael Dziokonski.

Region III (Lawrence-Lowell-Haverhill-Cape Ann-Chelsea-Everett-Lynn-Danvers)

The office is located at 110 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108; telephone 727-5590 or Toll Free 1-800-392-6450, extension 5590. The Director is Paul McDade.

Region IV (Cambridge-Somerville-Waltham-Concord-Woburn-Newton-Needham-Natick-Quincy-Randolph)

The office is located at 110 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108; telephone 727-5554. The Director is David Govostes.

Region V (Brockton-Taunton-Plymouth-Fall River-New Bedford-Cape Cod)

The office is located at 110 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108; telephone 727-7520 or Toll Free: 1-800-392-6450, extension 7520. The Director is David Tracht.

Brockton Area Office (Alice Marquis) - telephone 588-1954.

Taunton Area Office (Alice Marquis) - telephone 823-8141 (Thursdays only).

Fall River Area Office (Edna Feijo) - telephone 679-2820.

Region VI (Boston-Brookline)

The office is located at 110 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108; telephone 727-5554. The Director is Leo Harrod.

LEGAL BENEFITS

TRAVEL CONCESSIONS

Intrastate Travel Pass Identification

Travel pass/identification cards are issued by the Central Registration Department of the Commission for the Blind. In order to be eligible for this pass the person must be registered as legally blind.

The pass may be obtained in person at the Commission or through the mail. All requests for passes or information regarding these cards should be directed to the Central Registration department.

The pass requires the blind person's name, address, birthdate, signature, and one photograph, approximately 1" by 1". Expiration date is two years from the birth date.

Transportation company policies vary regarding the use of this card. Common carriers may allow a blind person to travel free of charge or at a reduced rate if the company wishes. This is permissive legislation in that the bus or transit system is not required to give free or reduced fares to blind persons. A sighted guide is not required to accompany the blind person in order for him to receive certain transportation free of charge. The MBTA allows a blind

person to travel free and unaccompanied. As other company policies vary it is suggested the blind person contact the specific company regarding their individual policy before using the pass. This pass may be used within Massachusetts on bus, train and subway lines honoring the pass. There are no free or reduced fares for airline travel.

Interstate Travel Pass

Applications for the American Foundation for the Blind One-Fare Travel Concession, or "out of state travel pass", are available to persons registered as legally blind with this Commission. These applications are available through the Central Registration Department. With this pass a blind person and sighted guide may travel for one fare or a reduced fare on some railroads and bus lines in the country.

The application may be obtained in person or through the mail. All requests and inquiries regarding this pass should be directed to the Central Registration Department.

The application requires the blind person's signature, three photos, approximately 1" by 1" and a check for \$2.00, payable to the AFB. Verification of blindness required by the AFB is completed by the Central Registration

Department.

The application is forwarded to the AFB in New York where it is processed and issued directly to the applicant along with an instruction booklet. These booklets are also available in the Central Registration Department.

The applicant should always verify the transportation company's policy prior to using the pass. At the present time the AFB pass requires the blind person be accompanied by a sighted guide in order to receive a reduced rate.

All questions regarding travel passes should be directed to the Central Registration Department.

Real Estate Tax Exemption

A blind person is entitled to an exemption on real estate of a home of which he is the owner and resident, to the extent of \$5,000 of the assessed value or \$437.50 in tax dollars, whichever is greater. In order to apply for this real estate exemption he must apply to the assessors of the city or town in which he lives. The Commission for the Blind will furnish a certificate of blindness to be used in connection with his application on request of the blind person.

Income Tax Exemption

A blind person is entitled to one extra exemption on account of blindness on his federal income tax. This will be in addition to any other exemption he would be allowed. Furthermore, he is entitled to an additional \$2,000 exemption on the state income tax. While the state statute uses the term "totally blind", it has been interpreted to mean legal blindness, by the Department of Corporations and Taxation. If a certificate of blindness is needed on the application for these exemptions, the Commission for the Blind will furnish such a certificate if the individual is registered as blind.

Auto Excise Tax

A blind person duly registered as blind can obtain an exemption of the auto excise tax on an automobile which is registered in his name. He applies for this exemption to the assessors of the city or town in which he resides.

HP Plates for Automobiles

A blind person may apply to the Registry of Motor Vehicles and obtain Handicapped Person plates for an automobile registered in his name.

Voting Rights

A blind person is entitled to vote in any

election and he is entitled to bring with him any sighted voter whom he designates to help him to record his vote on the machine or the ballot. He has the right to choose the person who accompanies him into the voting booth or to the machine.

SOME IMPORTANT LAWS

There are a number of laws which benefit persons who are blind. Those laws which have the widest application are listed below. All citations are from the General Laws of Massachusetts.

- ...Annuities for Blind Veterans, Ch 115 Sect 6B
- ...Automobile Excise Tax Exemption, Ch 60A Sect 1
- ...Discrimination by Housing Authorities, Ch 121 Sect 32
- ...Free Licenses for Dog Guides, Ch 140 Sect 139
- ...Handicapped Person Plates for Automobiles, Ch 90 Sect 2
- ...Medical Assistance, Ch 6 Sect 131E and Ch 118E
- ...One Fare Travel Concession, Ch 159 Sect 15
- ...Rehabilitation Services, Ch 6 Sect 129
- ...State Income Tax Exemption, Ch 62 Sect 5B

...Supplementary Security Income, Ch 6
Sect 131

...Education of Blind Children, Ch 766
Acts of 1972

A compilation of Massachusetts Laws
Relating to Blindness is available from
the Commission in print or on cassette tape.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance formerly provided to eligible blind residents of the Commonwealth under the Aid to the Blind program, is now provided through the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program which is administered by the Social Security Administration through its network of district offices throughout the State. What this means for blind persons in Massachusetts is that if they have limited income and resources and are in need of money to supplement their present monthly income, they should inquire about possible eligibility for cash assistance at the Social Security office servicing the community where they reside.

SSI is available to employed blind individuals as well as those who live on fixed incomes such as Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance, Railroad Retirement and other types of pensions. Being an employed blind individual does not disqualify you for benefits. There are special provisions for disregarding or not counting large portions of income from wages and sometimes, all of it. It is not uncommon to receive an SSI payment along with wages. Like the former Aid to the Blind program, SSI is interested in and places heavy emphasis on the rehabilitation of the blind and it is for this reason that such disregards of earnings are allowed. It is a form of incentive and pays

dividends in cash but, more importantly, it pays in personal dividends.

The amount of payment under SSI is established jointly under an agreement by the Federal and State Government, and Massachusetts is considered to have one of the highest benefit levels in the nation.

The Commission encourages all blind eligible residents of the Commonwealth to exercise their right to apply for SSI and hastens to point out that it is to a person's advantage to be determined eligible for SSI as blind rather than aged or disabled because of the three groups who may be eligible for SSI - aged, blind or disabled - the maximum level of payment is greater for the blind than the aged or disabled.

We also remind persons that if they were initially determined to be eligible for SSI as either aged or disabled, they may apply for the higher level of payment after becoming blind as well as aged or disabled. To do this, a blind person should contact his local Social Security Office and explain that he/she wishes to now apply for SSI as a blind individual. For further information on eligibility requirements for SSI, you should contact your local Social Security office and, in instances where the claim of blindness is in dispute, you should contact the

Commission if you are registered with us. We can and will act as your advocate when we have you registered and such a dispute arises. The Commission cannot and will not intervene when the subject of a dispute is something other than a question of the existence of a condition of blindness. Such matters have to be resolved between the SSI applicant and the SSI program staff. Dissatisfied applicants have the right of appeal and should do so when they feel that an SSI decision is unfair.

All applicants who are approved for SSI as blind are automatically covered by Medical Assistance or "Medicaid" as it is sometimes known in Massachusetts, and when the Commission is notified of an approval, an identification card is issued to cover payment for medical care and services. All SSI approved applicants are also eligible for social services.

(For more details on Medical Assistance and Social Services see other section of this information bulletin.)

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE BLIND PROGRAM AND SERVICES

Massachusetts provides Medical Assistance for residents under the Federal/State Program known as "Medicaid" (Title XIX of the Social Security Act). Medical Assistance for the blind is administered by the Commission for the Blind.

Medical Assistance provides payment for: Hospitalization (in-patient and out-patient services); physician services; diagnostic, preventative, and rehabilitation services; dental care; foot care; prescribed medication; and other health care services. It may also pay for deductible and co-insurance premium required of persons covered by Medicare.

In administering the Medical Assistance Program, the Commission strives to assure quality health care for its clients through coordinated efforts with the Departments of Public Health, Mental Health, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and other responsible Community and Federal/State Agencies.

ELIGIBILITY

All blind residents of the State who receive Supplementary Security Income (SSI) Benefits are automatically eligible for Medical Assistance. Other blind residents not receiving SSI may also be eligible for Medical Assistance provided their income and resources are not sufficient to meet the cost of medical expenses. In such instances, Medical Assistance may assume all or part of the cost of medical care depending upon what income or resources are available to the blind individual.

In considering an application, Medical Assistance bases its determination on Rules and Regulations established by Federal and State Laws. Some of the most significant requirements under these Laws are:

....Limits on personal property (cash-on hand, savings, stocks, bonds, investments, and cash surrender value of life insurance over \$1,500.).

....Limits on amount of income to be allowed to an individual or dependent family member(s) for cost of food, shelter, clothing, and other basic maintenance needs.

....Extent to which any family member may be financially responsible for an applicant applying for Medical Assistance.

The above information is furnished by the applicant on an Application/Declaration Form and evaluated by the Commission's Eligibility Unit. The decision of eligibility or non-eligibility is based upon information given by the applicant or a responsible representative acting in his/her behalf.

It is important that the information furnished be a complete and accurate representation of income and resources possessed by the applicant. When information is incomplete, inconsistent, or contradictory, eligibility cannot be established.

Whenever an applicant is dissatisfied with a decision rendered, regarding eligibility for Medical Assistance, the Commission recognizes and has provisions for the right of appeal. All matters of adverse action or inaction attributed to the Commission are subject to Administrative Review as a first method of resolving any client-agency disagreements.

Should the resulting decision of the Administrative Review be unsatisfactory an applicant or client may request a Fair Hearing. If the decision rendered is still unsatisfactory the applicant or client may seek final satisfaction through a Judicial Review by the Superior Court.

Any blind resident of the Commonwealth who thinks he/she may be eligible for Medical Assistance has the right to make application and may do so either in person, by mail, or by telephone. All requests for applications should be directed to the Commission's Medical Assistance Unit. The mailing address is Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, 110 Tremont Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108. For persons requesting application by telephone, the local number is 727-5571 and the toll free number outside the Boston area is 1-800-392-6450, extension 5571.

TALKING BOOK MACHINES

Talking Book Service is available to anyone unable to read conventional print due to a visual or physical impairment, including persons with a reading or learning disability.

Record players and cassette players with controls adapted for handicapped persons are available, as well as various attachments including headphones, pillow speakers, remote controls, and variable speed controls.

Any hospital, nursing home, day care center, public and private school serving individuals who qualify, may apply for Talking Book service.

Shortly after receipt of the machine, the applicant is registered with the Perkins Library in Watertown, or the Worcester Public Library. They will receive a catalog, information sheet, and instructions on ordering Talking Books and magazines.

Talking Books are books and magazines recorded on records and on cassette tape. Persons may choose from a wide variety of subjects including a large selection of popular magazines.

The Commission maintains a free repair service. If your machine is in need of repair, write: Talking Book Service, 72 Second Street, Cambridge, MA 02141, or telephone 547-5753; or toll free, 1-800-392-6450, Ext. 5550.

SOCIAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

The Commission for the Blind provides a wide range of social services for its clients, including Information and Referral, Family and Individual Counseling, Protective Services, Vision Utilization Services, Homemaker and Housing Services and Recreation Services.

While the Commission for the Blind will provide vision utilization, homemaker and recreation services to all its clients, it can only purchase services for those clients who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or who are income eligible. For eligibility standards, please check with the worker in your area. All direct services are provided to clients of the Commission regardless of income.

A social worker from the Commission will explain the services of the Commission to a client either in person during a home visit or by telephone. The worker will help to arrange for needed services: if the services are not provided by the staff of the Commission, the MCB worker will locate the appropriate community resource and make a referral for services. If you do not know the name of the MCB social rehabilitation worker for your area, see the section of this brochure entitled Regional Structure. If you telephone the number listed for your region, the agency telephone operator will be able to give you the name of your social rehabilitation worker.

FAMILY AND INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

Individual, group or family counseling services are available to assist clients in the adjustment to blindness, as well as coping with other problems. The service aims to promote understanding, strengthen family relationships, and develop independence.

PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Protective services are provided to adult clients who have suffered emotional or physical injury, caused by neglect, maltreatment, non-treatment or denial of their rights. The services include counseling, arranging for guardianship, if necessary, and arranging for medical, psychiatric, recreational or other needed services.

VISION UTILIZATION SERVICES

These services are designed to assist those individuals with a visual loss to use their remaining vision in the most effective way. When an individual expresses an interest in using a low vision device, the individual's referring ophthalmologist or optometrist is consulted as to whether the individual would, in fact, benefit from a low vision evaluation. The MCB case worker will make the proper arrangements for a low vision evaluation and will arrange for the individual to receive tools and devices prescribed, along with necessary instructions for their use. Follow-up service is

provided in order to give support and encouragement while the person is becoming accustomed to using the aids.

HOMEMAKER SERVICES

These services provide a trained and supervised homemaker to those blind individuals under 60, who without such a homemaker, could not remain in his/her own home. In addition to Blindness, problems such as serious illness or severe injury must exist in order for homemaker services to be provided by the Commission.

HOUSING SERVICES

Housing services are offered to assist the blind person in locating and gaining access to adequate housing, as well as assisting those who no longer are able to live in their present home situation to find other suitable living arrangements.

RECREATION SERVICES

These services are provided to encourage participation in social activities and to reduce social isolation. Commission staff will help the blind individual to select the recreational activity which he/she most prefers and which is most suitable to his/her abilities. The Commission worker will make the proper referral to the recreational program and will assist the client with social adjustment, if necessary.

The Commission has recently added a recreation consultant to its staff in order to develop a statewide recreation program based on the utilization of community recreation programs already in existence.

For more information on other social services of Rehabilitation Teaching and Community Mobility, please turn to those sections in this brochure.

REHABILITATION TEACHING

The Commission employs a staff of rehabilitation teachers who work as a team with other staff members of the Commission, particularly social workers, vocational rehabilitation counsellors, mobility instructors, and the Commission's staff engineer. The rehabilitation teachers visit the adult blind, particularly the newly blinded, in their homes to teach Techniques of Daily Living (TDL), which include cooking, cleaning and other homemaker chores, self-grooming, leisure time activities, communication skills including Braille, typing, handwriting and abacus, and basic orientation. Rehabilitation teachers do evaluation and followup regarding clients interested in learning Optacon.

Rehabilitation teaching is a step toward self-sufficiency by assisting the newly blinded person to become adjusted to his/her blindness to the extent that he or she will be able to take advantage of all the vocational and other rehabilitation services available through the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

The focus of all rehabilitation teaching is on the client's independent functioning in all areas of life.

Clients who are in need of intensive teaching (several times per week), receive rehabilitation teaching services through the Community Rehabilitation Unit of the Commission.

(For further information on intensive training, please see the section on the Community Rehabilitation Unit.)

COMMUNITY REHABILITATION UNIT

The Community Rehabilitation Unit is one of the newest programs of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. A primary goal of this new unit is to provide a better method of communication between the client and the professionals involved regarding the following elements of the rehabilitation process: orientation and mobility training, communication skills, such as braille, optacon, or typing, techniques of daily living and home management.

By having one person, the supervisor of the Community Rehabilitation Unit, responsible for all community mobility training in the state, excluding Region I (Springfield and West, which administers its own program), the referral process is greatly simplified. This results in faster service to the client whether he/she receives training from a member of the Community Rehabilitation Unit or from a private agency. The supervisor of the unit is also better able to provide up-to-date information regarding the client's mobility training to all staff involved and thus facilitate the entire rehabilitation process.

The multi-skilled staff of the Community Rehabilitation Unit is providing training to clients in their own environment in all of the above areas. A unique aspect

of this training is the intensive rehabilitation teaching program in which a client receives concentrated training in communications, and/or activities of daily living in the client's own home several times per week, thus combining some of the advantages of a residential program without disrupting the living situation. Eligibility for this service is determined according to the results of a comprehensive evaluation (all clients seen by the unit are thoroughly evaluated prior to training) and the client's need for intensive instruction for a predetermined length of time.

For further information regarding any aspect of the Community Rehabilitation Unit, contact Mr. Robert P. Takacs, supervisor of the unit, at the Commission for the Blind, telephone 727-7520 or, toll free 1-800-392-6450, extension 7520.

THE MULTIHANDICAPPED PROGRAM

The population with whom this program works are the mentally retarded blind, deaf blind, and the mentally retarded deaf blind. It is the goal of the program to meet, insofar as is possible, the needs of this population by making available to them the assistance of a vocational rehabilitation counsellor, social worker, rehabilitation teacher, mobility instructor, and Commission engineer.

The program staff members give direct service to the multihandicapped population in all regions except Region I, Springfield and western counties, which administers its own program. Another exception is that the staff doesn't give direct client service to people residing in Department of Mental Health state schools, state hospitals, or other Department of Mental Health funded community programs until such times as the client is ready to move either toward independent living and/or into competitive employment. In these instances, the staff will be available for consultation and will offer (up to 50 days per year) training to the staffs of these facilities, on understanding the problems of blindness.

Another goal of the staff is to plan, realistically, with the client, a program that will best meet his/her needs,

thus enabling the client to remain in the community, living in a suitable situation, finding employment commensurate with his/her skills and capabilities, teaching him/her those skills which will enable him/her to become an independent homemaker. Where the cited goals are not attainable, the rehabilitation teacher will offer lessons in leisure time activities thus helping him/her to occupy some of the lonesome hours.

In addition, the staff members of this unit will act as advocates for all of its clients to insure that each client receives all of the services which are available to him/her.

For further information about this program, please call Joseph Callero at 727-7520, or toll free: 1-800-392-6450 extension 7520.

PRE-SCHOOL UNIT

The pre-school unit staff provides an infant stimulation program for visually handicapped children from infancy to age three. These services are offered to both legally blind and partially sighted children. Our pre-school counselor visits the home of any blind infant and works directly with the child, actually shows the parent, usually the mother, how to handle a visually handicapped child. The counselor demonstrates techniques and skills useful in promoting independence in the child. The counselor also provides support, counsel and advice on the needs of the visually handicapped infant. Because early intervention is essential to the total developmental growth of a visually handicapped child it is imperative that parents be aware of these services and avail themselves and their children of them.

In addition to providing an infant stimulation program, the staff provides counseling to parents on the parenting of visually handicapped children up to the age of six and provides casework services on the families adjustment to blindness. The unit workers provide child advocacy for services and consultive services to people providing direct services to visually handicapped children such as Pediatric Nursing Homes, Cerebral Palsy Clinics, Childrens Rehabilitation Centers, and regular nursery schools. When requested either by parents, schools, or facilities the unit staff will act as

consultants to the child care staff, Teachers, and School Personnel in general, will observe, interpret and advise on the needs of visually handicapped children in their care.

The counselor interprets child development and may suggest appropriate referral services for whatever other problem the child may have. The counselor provides knowledge of educational materials such as toys and often will lend some to a child. The unit staff evaluates childrens development and may administer a developmental assessment to be used as a guide for both counselor and parent.

As the staffs' contact with child and family may originate in very early infancy, the counselor will know the family and their needs and desires for the child's future well being. Therefore when the child reaches the appropriate age, usually three, the unit staff will coordinate with Special Education, itinerant teachers, individual school departments and will serve on a CORE evaluation team when the child is cored.

For further information, please call Mrs. Chloe Davidson, Supervisor of the Pre-School Unit at 727-5590 or toll free: 1-800-392-6450, extension 5590.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Complete rehabilitation services from diagnosis to treatment, training and job placement, are available to blind persons through the Vocational Rehabilitation staff of the Commission. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program helps blind persons to secure work for pay through a wide variety of services which include:

Evaluation of rehabilitation potential, including diagnostic and related services necessary to the determination of eligibility for and the nature and scope of appropriate and necessary services to be provided.

Counseling, guidance and referral services.

Physical and mental restoration services.

Vocational and other training services, including personal and vocational adjustment, books and training materials; provided that training or training services in institutions of higher education shall be paid for only to the extent provided for in the Commission's regulations governing such activities, copies of which are available through your vocational rehabilitation counselor, or the Office of the Commissioner, on request.

Interpreter services.

Reader services, rehabilitation teaching services, and orientation and mobility services (Also, see sections of Rehabilitation Teaching and Community Mobility).

Telecommunication, sensory, and other technological aids and devices, as necessary.

Career counseling, job placement and follow-up.

Occupational licenses, tools and equipment.

Depending upon the Vocational Rehabilitation plan of the individual, which is designed jointly with his/her vocational rehabilitation counselor, other possible services may include maintenance and transportation.

For information and provision of any of these services, contact the vocational rehabilitation counselor or the social rehabilitation worker for your town (See the section on Regional Structure for your region and the proper telephone number); if you do not know the name of your worker, call the regional telephone number, or 727-5550, and you will be told the name of the counselor for your area.

EQUIPMENT

There is a wide range of equipment, both adapted and non-adapted, which can assist the blind person both on the job and at home. The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind provides eligible clients with job-related equipment, if it is needed to obtain or retain employment, and assist non-eligible clients in finding alternate methods for obtaining equipment.

The types of equipment most often inquired about are:

OPTACON

The Optacon is a compact portable reading aid which gives some blind and deaf-blind people independent and immediate access to the world of print. Using advanced electronics, the Optacon converts the image of a printed letter into a vibrating tactile form that a blind person can feel with one finger. Reading with an Optacon is, however, a slow process. A speed of approximately 40 words per minute is the fastest speed attainable. It is estimated that 2 out of every 100 people are able to use the Optacon. The approximate cost of an Optacon is \$3,000.

Some factors which may influence successful Optacon learning are age, motivation, language skills and a highly developed sense of touch.

For further information, write to:

Telesensory Systems, Inc.
3408 Hillview Avenue
P. O. Box 10099
Palo Alto, California 94303

Telephone: 415-493-2626

TSI
Jim Rodgers, Regional Manager
16 Burley Street
Wenham, Massachusetts 01984

Telephone: 617-744-2598

CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION SYSTEM

A Closed Circuit TV is a visual aid designed and manufactured to enable people with moderate to severe visual limitations to read and write. A closed circuit TV is made like a regular television set. It has a camera with a powerful zoom lens attached to it so that objects can be placed under the TV screen and magnified with the lens.

The approximate price of a closed circuit TV system ranges from \$1100 - 1900.

For further information, write to:

Visualtek
1610 25th Street
Santa Monica, California 90404

Telephone: 213-829-3453

Optiscope
100 Taft Avenue
Hempstead, N. Y. 11550

Telephone: 516-485-3322

Apollo Lasers, Inc.
6365 Arizona Circle
Los Angeles, California 90045

Telephone: 213-776-3343

LOW VISION AIDS

There are numerous low vision devices.
For information on magnifying devices
and illuminators, you should contact your
ophthalmologist or optometrist, or:

Brookstone Company
Peterborough, New Hampshire 03456

National Association for the Visually
Handicapped
305 East 24th Street
New York, N. Y. 10010

Many lighting stores carry an item called

a "Luxolamp Magnifier", which is an illuminating lamp combined with a powerful magnifier. The price is approximately \$60.00.

For information on Low Vision Glasses, write to:

Dr. Donald Selwyr
The National Institute for
Rehabilitation Engineering
Pompton Lakes, New Jersey 07442

Tel. 201-838-2600

Or for further information on Low Vision Aids, contact your MCB worker.

AIDS AND APPLIANCES

There are innumerable aids and appliances manufactured for use by blind persons. They include sewing aids, markers, cooking utensils, large print cookbooks, Braille watches, and talking calculators.

The American Foundation for the Blind offers one of the most extensive catalogues of aids and appliances available in Large print. The catalogue offers a full description of the item (items range from aids for home work and personal use as indicated above), the price, as well as an order blank and telephone "hot-line" for individual orders. Write or telephone the Foundation at:

15 West 16th Street, New York City,
New York, 10011 Tel. 212-924-2160

CAREER PLACEMENT OFFICE

The Career Placement Office, a department within the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, was established in September, 1976 for the purpose of placing legally blind people into permanent, competitive and suitable employment. Since inception of the placement service more than three hundred agencies, institutions and private companies have been developed for client employment.

Clients are referred to the Career Placement Office either by vocational rehabilitation counselors or by self-referral. A team of career placement specialists work with the clients to find employment suitable to the clients' abilities.

A full time staff engineer also works with the placement team. Their efforts are coordinated in order that prospective job sites can be evaluated on the basis of client adaptability.

Job placement serves as the basic function of the Career Placement Office; however, there are other areas in which the staff directs their efforts. Some of the additional services offered are: the Federal Unpaid Work Experience - which allows an individual to gain exposure to a routine work environment prior to his competing in the permanent job market; the Secretarial Training Program - which allows an individual the opportunity to learn or improve his or her secretarial

skills; and the Medical Transcriptionists Program - which allows an entry-level clerical candidate the chance to specialize in his or her skills.

Additional programs which are not yet ready for client participation are being researched and developed by the Career Placement Office staff, some of these include: the Kurzweil (reading machine) Training Program; Optacon (tactile touch reading) Program; the Transitional Employment Program, and the Home Based Employment Program.

Further information on any of these services offered may be obtained by contacting Mr. Richard Melchin, Placement Director, at 617-727-5568 or Toll Free 1-800-392-6450.

Employers who are considering the hiring of visually handicapped or blind persons are invited to contact the Career Placement Office.

VENDING FACILITIES

The Commission sponsors a Vending Facilities program for the blind under the provisions of the Federal Randolph-Sheppard Act. This law provides for the licensing of blind persons to operate vending facilities on Federal and other property. Small businesses are established in public and private buildings to sell candy, soft drinks, tobacco, newspapers and similar merchandise. Many also sell hot drinks, soups, sandwiches, crackers, cookies, cakes, and other pastries. In addition, snack bars or mini-lunch counters are operated as a service to employees in industrial plants and large office buildings. The Commission finds the locations for these vending facilities, obtains the permit to operate, constructs, equips, and initially stocks the facility and, then, turns the facility over to the trained blind person to operate as his/her own business, as long as he/she can do so profitably. The blind operator receives all the profit from the business.

There are more than 50 blind people operating vending facilities successfully right now in Massachusetts. In addition to that, there are more than twenty blind people employed as assistants by these operators - assistants on their way up the ladder of success. The average earnings per operator is slightly more than \$12,000 per year. Some of the more experienced operators, however, earn more than that. If you would like more information on the Vending Facilities program call William Cheverie 617-727-7520.

BUREAU OF INDUSTRIES

The Bureau of Industries operates six sheltered workshop facilities located in six areas of the Commonwealth. Five of the six facilities are, in actuality, satellite shops; being small of structure and employing between five and ten blind persons. These smaller facilities are engaged in providing services such as chair caning and repairing, restrunging of tennis rackets, and sub-contract assembly work. The workshop at Cambridge is by far the largest, employing most of the blind workers in the program. At Cambridge, the production of brooms, mops, and pillow cases for Federal agencies, and brooms and mops for State agencies, has been the chief function of the workshop. At the Cambridge Industries we also have writing instruments which are sold to State agencies and private industry. We are also expanding the line to fine-line markers. The writing instruments department will be transferred to the Lowell Shop in 1978.

The Bureau of Industries has a Home-bound Program, by which it pays for labor and/or products left on consignment.

There is currently being designed an Evaluation and Training component for use in placement of employees within the Bureau of Industries. This should be operational in early Spring 1978.

The Commission is now directing its attention towards greatly expanding the workshop's sub-contracting work. This all adds up to presenting the Commission with an opportunity to provide employment for additional blind persons in 1978. The State-Use Law requires cities, towns, county and state facilities to purchase articles manufactured at Commission workshops.

The six workshop facilities are located in Cambridge, Lowell, Worcester, Springfield, Pittsfield, and Fall River.

For information on the workshop program contact Louis Cardello, Supervisor of Industries at (617) 727-5558, or (617) 547-5753.

RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

Consistent with the primary goal of the entire Commission, the ultimate goal of the research department is to improve services for the client population.

Efforts undertaken to achieve this goal include: information collection and dissemination, monitoring and evaluation activities, and research and planning projects. The purpose of the Research Department is, then, to enhance the Commission's ability to be accountable, responsible and innovative in planning and delivering services to the client population in the Commonwealth.

In an effort to make the agency more responsible for the services it provides, the research department, through monthly reports, maintains a monitoring system measuring client progress from referral to closure. In addition, more formal evaluation studies are being conducted and planned. These include client satisfaction studies and regionally based program evaluation studies. Hopefully, therefore, opportunities for social integration will be improved by the "Study of Factors Related to Discrimination in Employment of the Blind". Client utilization of services will potentially be improved with the creation of a consumer-oriented 'Yellow Pages for the Blind', and through information derived from a 'Survey of Rehabilitation Facilities', referrals from the agency may be more appropriate to client needs.



FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND

MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION

FOR THE BLIND

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